

WORK-LIFE BALANCE TIPS with Lizz Hykel

When we are healthy, we think more clearly. When we think more clearly, we are more productive. When we are more productive, we get work done more quickly. When our work is done, we are less stressed. When we are less stressed, we are healthier.

It is up to us to create a healthy cycle in our lives.

Here are a few pro tips to help your body and your mind.

- 1) **Hydrate.** You have probably heard this before. Instead of boring you with stats of its importance, this tip is for those who have a hard time getting it in. Try zero calorie beverages. ICE beverages, Crystal Light mixes, and lemon juice with your preferred zero calorie sweeteners in water also help to make it delicious and easier to drink.



- 2) **Move.** Whether you have a fitness regimen or not, try to walk throughout your day (preferably outside, but not required). Get up from your desk every hour or two and take a stroll around the office, or house, to get the blood moving and reset. This will help clear your mind, and is great for your joints and muscles- especially your knees and back.

- 3) **Stretch.** Stretching tight muscles is so important to prevent injury and stay moving and pain-free. Specifically your *hips and traps*, because that is where most of us hold our tension. They are two connective points or a significant number of muscles, and a lot of muscle dysfunction stems from their tightness. *Attached are step-by-step directions for two life-changing stretches you can do seated right at your desk.*



- 4) **Eat.** We all want to eat better, but it can be challenging to change habits, and even harder to stick with them long-term. Instead of removing things from your diet in an attempt to eat better or “less”, try to prioritize protein and veggies. Doing this will help give you more energy, fueling your body with the macro and micronutrients it craves. When you meet those requirements, you are naturally more likely to make better choices, but there is still room left for chocolate when you need it.

- 5) **Sleep.** Poor sleep leads impaired cognitive function, irritability, and poor nutritional choices. Pay attention to your cravings on days when you don't sleep well. Easy tip: The light from TVs and phones stimulate the brain, and there are apps (Flux is free; icon is depicted to the right) to remove the blue light from your screen so you can still watch or read or write, and still prepare your mind for sleep.



- 6) **Relax.** And I cannot stress this enough (pun intended.) Stress will age you like nothing else. Not to be dramatic, but it can quite literally kill you. High cortisol levels lead to an array of other complications, especially over a long period of time. Figure out your triggers, find a meditation app (ex. the Shine app, and Daily Wellness on Spotify), follow the 5 tips listed above, and last, but not least:

DO NOT LET PERFECT RUIN GOOD.

The tips listed above are all well and good, but some days you have it and some days you don't. That's okay; do what you can and smile. Do something small every day to give yourself peace. Set boundaries where you need them. Prioritize your health and your peace, and trust everything will be okay.



Trap Stretch Sequence

- 1) Seated OR standing, reach your right hand behind your back to grab your left wrist, gently pulling your left arm to the right side. *
- 2) Tilt your head to right, stretching the left-side trap.
Hold for 60 seconds.
- 3) Tilt your head right and up, looking at the sky, stretching the front of your neck on the left side.
Hold for 60 seconds.
- 4) Tilt your head right and down looking at an imaginary pocket on the right chest, stretching the back of your left side
Hold for 60 seconds.
- 5) Release the arms to neutral.
- 6) Make three gentle head circles to the right, then three gentle head circles to the left.
- 7) Come back to neutral.
- 8) Take three shoulder circles forward, then three shoulder circle back.
- 9) Come back to neutral.
- 10) Repeat this sequence on the other side.



*Holding the opposite wrist is preferred, but optional. You can also sit on the hand of side you are stretching with the palm up (ex. sit on right hand and tilt head to left.) Or you can simply just tilt the head. No excuses not to stretch here- **do not let perfect ruin good.** ;)

Piriformis Stretch

- 1) Seated in a chair, with the feet on the floor.
- 2) Cross the right ankle over the left knee.
- 3) Gently press down on the right knee.
- 4) For a deeper stretch, gently lean forward, keeping the back straight.
- 5) Hold for 60-120 seconds.
- 6) Release, switch sides, and repeat.

